



**U.S. Immigration
and Customs
Enforcement**

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News Release

ICE and local law enforcement arrest 14 gang members and associates
Actions are part of Operation Community Shield, anti-gang effort credited with more than 2,300 arrests nationwide

SALT LAKE CITY— Fourteen foreign nationals with ties to violent street gangs are in custody today following a three-week operation involving U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents and detectives from the Salt Lake Area Gang Project. Eight of the arrests occurred overnight; six of the suspects were taken into custody earlier this month.

The suspected foreign national gang members and their associates are all Mexican nationals. Three of the individuals had prior criminal records, including theft, assault and drug violations. All of the foreign nationals arrested have been placed in formal immigration removal proceedings.

The multi-agency operation targeted foreign national gang members and gang associates in Salt Lake County.

“Street gangs pose a growing public safety threat to communities throughout this area,” said Joseph Romel, assistant special agent in charge for ICE investigations in Utah. “The violence, sophistication, and scope of these organizations have reached intolerable levels. This operation shows how ICE is working with its law enforcement partners and leveraging its broad authorities to dismantle these criminal organizations.”

Since its launch one year ago, Operation Community Shield has resulted in the arrest of 2,388 members of 239 different gangs. More than 40 of those subjects were arrested in Utah.

Operation Community Shield was launched in February 2005 after a threat assessment by all ICE field offices identified MS-13 as one of the largest and most violent street gangs in the country. The assessment found that most of the gang members were foreign-born, in the United States illegally, had prior criminal convictions, and/or were involved in crimes that made them subject to ICE’s broad immigration and customs authorities.

ICE kicked off Operation Community Shield with an enforcement operation that resulted in the arrest of more than 100 members of MS-13. In the months that followed, ICE agents nationwide joined ranks and continued targeting MS-13 members in their jurisdictions. In May 2005, ICE expanded Operation Community Shield to include all criminal street gangs and prison gangs with foreign-born members.

Thus far, ICE agents from 76 field offices, working with law enforcement agencies nationwide, have arrested a total of 2,388 suspected street gang members and associates. These apprehensions include 533 criminal arrests and 1,855 administrative arrests. More than 1,075 of these suspects have violent criminal histories. As part of the operation, ICE agents have also seized roughly 117 firearms.

ICE

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement was established in March 2003 as the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security. ICE is comprised of four integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities.